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Director of Libraries

Columbia University Library

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# Annual Report for Special Collections

1938 - 1939

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Annual Report for Special Collections

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The present administrative unit known as Special Collections has been in operation now for a period of one year. This administrative change was met at the beginning with anger, bitterness and no little misunderstanding on the part of the former staff members. At present all appears quiet, but the bitterness still remains and I am not so sure that there has been any more than a nominal acceptance of the present reorganization. After a year of experience I am of the opinion that Dr. Lehmann-Haupt and myself will not be able to work together on the same staff. That he is on the library staff at all is one point which I had understood would not be. The fact that he is still on the staff and that he occupies the same office in a situation which is not clear to many, has led to no end of misunderstanding and suspicion. This relationship between Dr. Lehmann-Haupt and our department is not just a personal problem, but affects each member of our staff, affects the relation of our work with other departments of the library, becomes a factor in work with other University departments, and, especially in the case of Special Collections, is a question sooner or later raised by members of our public. If an annual report is to express the need of a department as well

as to report the work accomplished, this one point of misunderstanding has occupied the most conspicious role in our work of the past year and should be eliminated. There should be no mistake in anyone's mind as to either Dr. Lehmann-Haupt's relationship to the University Library or his relationship to Special Collections. Although we agreed last year that he was to retain his old office in Low Memorial Library, I no longer feel that with his influence constantly present Special Collections will ever be free from suspicion or bitterness. The situation is unsatisfactory and the year has only convinced me of the futility of the compromise. Sooner or later a decision will have to be made again, for I see no way of working with him on library problems without doubt on my part of his intentions. I do not wish to be associated with him, and I do not see how the department can develope when he holds such an important position in the building. Under the present circumstances it will be impossible to keep both Dr. Lehmann-Haupt and myself in the same building on the same staff for a much longer period. I see no advancement in continuing to attempt to watch him and circumvent his manoeuvers. There has been some question in my mind that perhaps the administrative policy towards my position, and perhaps towards his, has been changing from that which we first discussed before I came to Columbia. I understood, of course, that you wished to work slowly. I do feel, however, that the situation

needs again to be carefully considered and clarified.

Staff Members

In connection with the Seligman Library and Miss Bogardus, the initial misunderstanding has carried over chiefly, I believe, because of old affiliations and the continuance of the library connection which was given to Dr. Lehmann-Haupt, her former immediate superior. In all fairness I believe she has had a difficult adjustment to make. To have expected her to work with me as a first assistant was not consistant with her former allegiances. She has had to maintain an independence although performing her duties with exactness. She has been assigned the work of supervising classification and cataloging for the Book Arts Collection. She has eschewed all other responsibilities except those of the Seligman Collection which she handles independently and directly with you. There are certain problems, such as page service which she has had to refer to us. She consults with those in the University whom she thinks best qualified upon questions of classification and cataloging. Not once have I received any unsolicited information of her work or her policies. However, I do believe that she has a strong sense of professional pride which, if the necessity of a personal loyalty to an old regime is eliminated, will lead to better cooperation.

Mr. Howes has taken a great interest in the work in Special Collections, especially in the Book Arts division. He has been help-

ful, sincere and loyal in his work - loyal to the interests of the library - and I have enjoyed his assistance. He takes especial interest in the handling and care of books and is a natural collector with a good sense of values and an appreciation of the beauty of books. In many ways he has acted practically as a first assistant, and manages the reading room. He will now take over the work which Miss Kunze has been doing on the catalog under Miss Bogardus' supervision, and I shall be able to get at our catalog needs with less difficulty and without so much misunderstanding.

We have not been so successful with our other student assistant help. We now have a Mr. Sheffield, who plans to begin his School of Library Service work this coming Fall. He is taking hold slowly but I hope successfully, although other complications indicate that experience in Special Collections is not what he needs. The page boys have proved better than expected for such work, and, as far as I have heard, have managed to give service not only to ourselves but also to Plimpton, East Asiatics, Columbiana and Mathematics, except for special jobs. The N. Y. A. boys were often called away from their book oiling to help out on special moving and other odd jobs.

Miss Cushing has had the difficult and often thankless work of serving four different men. The fact that she has managed to keep us all reasonably satisfied without, I believe, any undue advantage

being taken of her time, has shown considerable ability. In her work on exhibition labels and the typing of special reports she has shown particular accuracy and care. She has used discretion in the necessity of serving two opposite interests, but I do not doubt her loyalty to the library administration. Her work has been more than just typing. She covers the library office, handling the numerous miscellaneous visitors with efficiency and courtesy. She is very conscientious as regards the responsibility of keeping the office covered. I feel that her value to the department and her help in the office has increased a great deal and she is responsible for much of the smooth running of our work over here. I should like to recommend an increase in salary for her, feeling certain that it would be justified. Miss Cushing's first year on the permanent payroll ends on July 31, 1939.

Division of Staff Work and Responsibility

Room 202, The Library Office, is covered by Miss Cushing or myself except at the noon hour when it is covered by Mr. Hoyler, the junior page, with Miss Bogardus in the Seligman Library. (Five hours per week.)

Page service for the department and Seligman, Plimpton, East Asiatics, Columbiana and Mathematics is given by the junior page two hours daily. (Ten hours per week.)

The room is never left without some one present. Occasion-

ally Mr. Howes or Mr. Sheffield are requested to come up to cover the room.

Miss Cushing takes dictation from Mr. Hamlin in Avery, from Mr. Angel in the Music Library and from Dr. Lehmann-Haupt in his office on scheduled hours or specially arranged periods. I plan to be here at those times.

Room 102, The Reading Room, is covered by Mr. Howes and by Mr. Sheffield the student Assistant. Mr. Howes attends a class on weekday mornings for one hour between 9:30 and 10:30 and makes up the time by working until six o'clock each evening. He also assists Miss Bogardus in filing and routine checking in connection with the cataloging of the Book Arts Collection. Miss Kunze formerly did this work for Miss Bogardus and spent approximately twenty hours a week in this way as she did little work with the public. Mr. Sheffield is now fetching most of the books for readers. The room is not completely covered at all times; but some one is in the near vicinity, and if an inner-vault book is in use I take work down there to do when books need to be obtained from other rooms.

Room 205, The Seligman Library, is covered by Miss Bogardus from 9:00 A.M. until 1:00 P.M. each day, being relieved by Mr. Sheffield each morning for a period or on special request. On Mondays and

Thursdays when Mr. Seligman is in town, special problems arise between the hours of eleven and one, which are handled in the best way we can. With N. Y. A. boys we had more help for carrying bags, etc. After one o'clock the office administers requests for material from this room.

Only because of the trust I can place in Mr. Howes do I believe that we are able to say that the rooms are adequately covered. Our chances of obtaining such reliable and intelligent student assistant work on the average is small. I should like to hope from an administrative point of view that two reading rooms need not be maintained in the west wing of The Low Library. They are not justified from the point of view of efficiency. Our efforts are divided over two reading rooms and an office. The number of telephone calls and visitors to my office does not make it practical for me to be downstairs much of the time. We often find it necessary to rely on student assistants more than I wish, but a professional librarian, Miss Bogardus, Mr. Howes or myself, is always at hand.

Cataloging Figures

Report submitted by Miss Bogardus on Cataloging Figures for Book Arts Collection:

Books at catalog department July 15, 1939.....505

Books cataloged since July 1, 1938.....623
(Of these, cards have come for 438 books.
We are waiting for cards for the other 185.)

Books we have sent to the catalog department
since July 1, 1938.....807

Waiting in Book Arts to be cataloged:
(All figures approximate)
To be transferred from the Main Library.....100
Books to be cataloged..... 85
Epstean pamphlets.....583
Total.....768

Total books and pamphlets to be cataloged:
(Both those now at the catalog department
and those in Book Arts).....1273

* * *

I may add that nearly 350 volumes of the Emerson Collection are at the Catalog Department. Those volumes to be transferred from the Main Library have been here since before I came.

The figures on cataloging of "B", "X" and all other collections except Book Arts, are being reported, I expect, by the Catalog Department.

We have requested two cards of the Catalog Department for any new addition to collections other than Book Arts. These are

shelved temporarily in the "B" room. They serve as a check on the material we have received since July, 1938, as well as a source of information. A careful study of our cataloging needs and proceedure is necessary, and I shall welcome any help for such work.

Rooms and Equipment

During July and August of last year a great deal of moving of the collections was undertaken in order to rearrange the center of administration of the collections. In planning this work I attempted to concentrate the essential collections so that supervision of the material could be controlled as carefully as possible from one room. Many new shelves and other changes were made to adjust ourselves to the new location. We now feel somewhat like a compact unit, although I regret that I cannot be closer to the actual supervision and helping of readers. The constant trotting up and down stairs too often makes both the working with readers and the work on books a series of interruptions. I am not completely satisfied that we have solved the physical set-up, and feel that often readers are not sufficiently controlled in the reading room. Only one mutilation has been noted, and that in a spiral-bound photographic magazine; but the possibility of more is present. I do not feel justified in saying that we supervise at all times any and all readers. However, we do see to it that when manuscripts or other special material is being used, some responsible person is in the room. Un-

less we should add rapidly to any one collection, the shelving and present equipment will do for the year. It will be possible to shelve special collections such as the Emerson Collection, now classified as "B" room books, as a unit in Room 301, although I prefer not to use this room until absolutely necessary, as I do not believe it is as carefully controlled as Room 104.

The office is much in need of a new typewriter. I find it often impossible to carry on conversation with the typewriter going at full speed. Miss Cushing uses her machine constantly and should have one that works better and more quietly. For exhibition labels and such work a good machine is desirable. Mr. Li lent us his for a day or so when working on the labels for the Emerson Exhibition. I hope that we may be put on the list as the next to receive a new typewriting machine. Miss Cushing approves of a Royal, but not the noiseless type. The new machines run a great deal more quietly than does our present one.

The question of light in our reading room is occasionally a subject of complaint by readers. Nor do I consider it a satisfactory study light. I, however, have no solution to offer that would not involve more expense than I feel is warranted unless the time comes when we no longer can hope for a more complete renovation of the entire West Wing of Low Memorial Library.

I have no other major request for equipment or changes.

Exhibitions

The exhibition room was used by Dr. Lehmann-Haupt for an exhibition on "World Literature in Illustrated Editions of the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century" during the month of January. From the middle of February until April 1st, the School of Engineering exhibited material on its history celebrating its 75th Anniversary. Between April 11th and May 15th, an exhibition of the manuscripts and first editions of the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson was displayed. The Salem Hyde Collection was used as the basis of this exhibition, but numerous other interesting volumes were borrowed from Friends and Alumni of Columbia University. Dr. Haven Emerson spoke informally of his childhood memories of his grandfather's younger brother, and read many interesting passages from the letters of his grandfather and great-grandfather on the evening of April 11th. A typed check list was made of the exhibition and a photograph of each case was made by Dr. Bennett to accompany the check list. During the summer months an exhibition on modern fine printing in America is being shown which will last through the summer session.

Loans for Exhibitions

For an exhibition on modern bookbinding at the Institute of Graphic Arts, four bindings from the Book Arts Collection were loaned. In connection with the International Salon of Photography of the Pictorial Photographers of America, a loan of some of the

interesting books, from the Epstean Collection on Photography, celebrating the centennial of the announcement of the discoveries by Daugerre in 1839 were put on exhibition in the Educational Hall of The American Museum of Natural History.

Other material is loaned from time to time for exhibitions on the campus. To College Library material from the Book Arts Collection has been loaned. For exhibition cases in the corridors of South Hall some of the Washington manuscripts were loaned. Material is also loaned to the Library of the School of Library Service in connection with the course on The History of the Book and for exhibition purposes. Special materials are used by Dr. Lehmann-Haupt for his classes.

Exhibition Cases Lines

Some work was done on the exhibition cases to make them satisfactory for regular use. A Bancroft library binding cloth was used to line the backs, and a platform was built for the bottom of each case. Boxes were covered so as to give variety to the cases. They are proving to be satisfactory. The exhibition room, although far from attractive, has served its purpose, and I do not propose any change until a more permanent plan with regard to Special Collections is in sight.

X893's

We have read the shelves with the help of Dr. Mendelsohn on

the Semetic literature in the manuscript room. These were in very bad condition. Besides getting material in order, locating all but about twelve items, we withdrew the envelopes, packages, single sheets, pamphlets, and bunches of fragments, and have put all these in our special envelopes of uniform size. All clips and rubber bands have been removed. That means the material is divided into two sections, but leaves the books together and the pamphlets following. It will make more satisfactory shelving for both groups of material. Many of the books were beyond repair, and for these portfolios were ordered. A few were sent to be rebound, and a pile is reserved for repair. The whole collection needs a careful oiling.

Shelf List Reading

The shelves have been checked for the books in the "B", 018, 019 and "P" classifications. The books in 017, in "K", "J", "M", "E" and the remainder of those in "X" classification need yet to be read. There are some volumes missing, but no serious loses, and from time to time we find some of those which have been misplaced or changed in classification. The shelves are in fair order in the vault room. We have checked over the shelving especially the folios, and, I believe, no volume is now actually suffering because of its position, although there are a few sets which would be better lying flat rather than standing upright.

Book Oiling

Our N. Y. A. workers this year have been of good use in helping us with miscellaneous work, but chiefly with the oiling of books. We got a good selection of boys who developed care in their work. Volumes in 018.31, 017, in "P", "H", "K" and in the "B" collections have all been oiled once. In good oiling work the volumes are allowed to stand out at least one night and a second coating is then given if necessary. I have not had this done, giving them only one oiling and putting them back on their shelves every night, or shortly after oiling. Otherwise I would have had no way to control them. The volumes in the inner vault have not yet been oiled, except for a few which Mr. Howes or myself took care of. If we do not have N. Y. A. help next year, I hope some worker, perhaps a member of the binding staff, might be assigned for two half-days a week just to attend to the oiling. Thus, over a period of time, I believe the collection would be kept in good condition, and, at least, all new additions to the collection could be carefully oiled before shelving. It would save on the ultimate binding bill. I believe the solution we use for oiling is more satisfactory than a paste, such as the New York Public Library uses, for N. Y. A. workers, and the volumes do not need to be left out over night or to be interlined with waxed paper for a few days after oiling.

Repair Work on Benjamin Collection

The repair work undertaken on the Benjamin Collection by Mr. Adolph Hagens was an interesting experiment in the care of a

special collection of 19th century literature. The aim was to keep every volume in its original binding, to repair with materials similar to those used in the original, and to give the collection the appearance of a well-care-for library. Little attention had been paid to the condition of the volumes at time of purchase, so that many were in a bad condition. The work has had this one result above others, namely, that the necessity of a good condition at time of purchase is a much-to-be-desired condition which cannot be satisfactorily replaced by rebinding or repair work. The aim of the work was not to imitate the appearance of the shelves of a wealthy collector, but rather to have each volume in a condition to be handled and read while at the same time preserving all points with regard to its production which would be of aid to bibliographers. Only 417 volumes were handled by Mr. Hagens. On many only a little work was done; but each was checked carefully, color put on worn or frayed corners, lose sheets or plates attached, and the binding thoroughly cleaned and oiled.

Cost of Repair Work on the Benjamin Collection

The cost is an interesting consideration. I am of the opinion that such work, done by the right man, does not come to anywhere near the cost of sending it out to a commercial binder. In fact, from our calculations, it does not come to more than special care

on only those few which would require complete rebinding under normal proceedure. These figures do not count regular binding routine and records which are required for any handling of the books.

Salary to Hagens.....$135.20
Supplies (most of which we still have)..... 18.07
Total.....$153.27

#books on which some work was done.....417
Cost per volume for the complete job.....$ 0.37

# volumes which normally would have demanded rebinding because of broken hinges, spines..157

Cost per volume if he had taken care of only these 157 volumes.....$ 0.98

You will notice that it must cost more than routine binding to take care of a collection if each volume is to be made safe for handling; but the cost is not as high per volume as if the work was put into special style bindings, and the results on all of the bindings are the envy and delight of any collector. There are, of course, many more problems to be solved in the care of this collection - the manuscript material, the periodicals, the newspapers (now stored in large folders). The work will be carried on this Fall, especially that work which can be done satisfactorily by a commercial binder. When the funds are available for careful repair for other special collections, I hope an expert repair-worker can again be located.

Pamphlets in Envelopes and Boxes

A large collection of pamphlets was on hand when I arrived, many of which had been cataloged as waiting for the bindery, or shelves, as well as other odds and ends. We developed a classification for these using a "ZZ" mark below the Cutter number. Each pamphlet was put in one of two sizes of envelopes and the class mark and author and title written on the outside; then the envelope was filed away in pamphlet boxes. This was done for material in Book Arts, and for the many hundreds of Epstean pamphlets, still uncataloged although available through a check list. We are also developing envelopes for classes of ephemera which is being saved. In this manner the type specimens are filed away by name of foundry at the beginning of the collection of the books in this classification. Paper specimens are being filed away in the same manner by name of manufacturer. The envelopes are being used to file away what I call press specimens; that is, material which might be cataloged in 017 classification but is not big enough to stand on the shelves. I am hoping this collection will not need to be cataloged as most of it is just ephemera of private presses, announcements, keepsakes and other interesting specimens of modern press work. It is being arranged alphabetically under name of designer or name of press or group issuing material. In time it will develop into an interesting file, somewhat of a per-

manent place for specimens which first go into the vertical file. We have not used the envelopes long enough yet to be sure that they are practical; but they do put the material in order, keep it clean, and preserve it in the original format, and they present a neat appearance. At any time a pamphlet receiving unusual demand for use may be easily changed from its "ZZ" classification. For the amount of material cared for, I believe it is saving money over the cost of binding, and I hope it will be as permanent as bindings without the expense of binding or the mutilation often involved.

Binding and Repair

We have had adequate funds for binding; but I have proceeded cautiously in this matter, trying to be more sure of what was happening and of the ability of our binders. I am of the opinion that we need more repair to our bindings and more care of them than we do the actual rebinding. Some repair work has been done, which I accept as so much free work. I should like to see the work developed here at Columbia rather than an attempt to send our work outside. I have little to report on the binding of the collection. There are a number of very valuable books which need care and which will be expensive to have done properly. These I shall gradually take to Dr. Bennett. The biggest job on binding this year was done on the Semetic books, which have not yet been returned. I hope soon to work on the volumes in the inner vault room so that we will know

that each book there is being kept in as perfect condition as possible.

Additions to the Epstean Collection

The most notable gifts to Special Collections were made this year by Mr. Edward Epstean to his collection of photography. He has ever been watchful to fill in gaps in the early history and development of the art as well as sending up to the collection the important modern books in the field. He recognizes the importance of those early stepping-stones toward photography, such as Traber's Nervus Opticus (1675) with its description of the camera obscura, and Scheele's Opuscula Chemica et Physica (1788-89) with his observations on the dissimilar powers of the rays of the spectrum in darkening nitrate of silver. More than a hundred volumes have been added to the collection which were published before 1900. The two volumes of Excarsions Daugerriennes (1841-42) were interesting additions. A valuable set of negatives and positives of the letters of Nicephore Niepce will serve as research material for anyone investigating the invention of photography. The wisdom of joining such an historical and research collection in a special field to a large university library has been justified. More than once have sets and reference books from other departments been of use to Mr. Epstean in his research, and it will undoubtedly prove of value to other workers in the field to be able to have at hand

materials of the general University Library to supplement the volumes in this collection.

Gifts

A few miscellaneous gifts have come to the Book Arts, especially from Dr. Lehmann-Haupt who presents volumes from time to time and the ephemera of printing which he receives in the mail. Only one alumnus, on moving, hesitatingly offered some of his books after bringing a few volumes which he had intended for Columbiana. He thought he had come to the main library office. A first printing of Shakespeare in America was in the lot. This had one volume missing, but the rest were in the original boards. On the whole I do not believe the alumni know how much we appreciate such gifts. Nine palm leaf manuscripts were added to our present collection by Montgomery Schuyler, class of 1899, which are of interest. They have as yet to be cataloged. Professor R. L. Rusk has given to the library his collection of negatives of Emerson letters which he used in editing his edition of the Letters. These are being set in individual folders and dated. They will then be arranged in boxes chronologically in the order they appear in the volumes. Later acquisitions may be easily filed into these boxes, and I hope to develop a system for the care of manuscript letters in the same

First American Shakespeare

Palm Leaf Manuscripts

Emerson Photostats

way which will eliminate the necessity of having groups or individual letters mounted and bound. There are, of course, instances when volumes of manuscripts will be better mounted and bound. Professor Rusk presented to the collection his earlier volume of Emerson-Clough Letters published by the Rowfant Club, and also a few miscellaneous letters collected in connection with his research.

Book Arts Acquisition

In the purchase of books for the Book Arts Collection, we have attempted to acquire the essential new reference material, and have filled requests for specimen material for class use for Dr. Lehmann-Haupt whenever possible. The division of funds and the policy for purchase in other special collections has not been developed. A large collection of literary English and American annuals was added to that classification. No pretense at all has be been made to add anything to the general vault room or manuscript room collection; nor have I considered the allotment for special collections purchasing as applying to this field. As we are now claiming an Emerson collection, a few purchases have been made in that direction, and more funds may be used in this way. We should like to develop a collection of books illustrated by Alexander Anderson. As most of the bargains along this line come in small

sales, and as it is very important that these books be examined for their condition, it has not been found practical to try to send in bids very often. If any funds may be diverted to this type of buying, it would be very helpful to have some one who can take the time for sales.

Kent Manuscripts

A scrapbook of manuscripts and other miscellaneous material came in with the Kent Collection including a number of letters from the first Presidents of the United States. These were kept in their scrapbook and other material mounted in. An N. Y. A. graduate student compiled a table of contents and the volume was rebound and will be placed in the vault room.

Development of Collections and Services

The development of Special Collections, except for the Book Arts Collection, depends almost entirely on its gifts. In consequence, there are really very few working tools which usually go along with such collections. No attempt has been made to acquire such tools, because it is perhaps questionable how much duplication with the Reference Department should be made, and because the recognition of responsibility for any such reference or bibliographical work has not been assigned to us. We use the reference department for this type of work. Some understanding of our library functions other than serving the needs of the Book Arts courses of the School

of Library Service and a storage for certain special collections should be recognized or we will have little means to justify our existence other than as a lure to private collectors. We hope to fit ourselves into the general scheme of library service rather than to be cut off from the general library or to be considered as competitors to the services in South Hall. I hope during the next year we may develop some policies in regard to the acquisition in special fields.

Services to the Public

Our services to the public are perhaps greater than to the University faculty and student body. Our student use is by Library Service students, and an occasional graduate student. Practically no faculty members, aside from Dr. Lehmann-Haupt, find a use for the collections. Our value in services is perhaps to be measured over larger periods of time, and may often be of a negative fashion because of withdrawing from use rather than encouraging frequent handling.

Our most interesting work has often been with members of the public for whom we make no restrictions if they may be properly identified and if they have a legitimate request for material. We have no problems of rush for material or seats for readers, and it is assumed that the gracious and helpful service to a reader forms

a friend for the library and makes another potential donor. Letters and reference questions are answered whenever within reason and our facilities. The people with old volumes are helped to verify their worth. Printers and book makers are welcomed. A few alumni doing research work come in for further study. No set policy has been established with regard to the use of books or manuscripts by readers. Each request is settled on its own merits when it arises. We do check for bursar receipts, but have had as yet no reader who was not connected with Columbia or who was unwilling to obtain an identification from the office. We appreciate the checking the office can do for us, and are especially grateful for the knowledge that any reader may be referred to the office when demanding special privileges.

Aims

One year, perhaps, should not be considered sufficient time to understand and analyze what I believe should be our aims in Special Collections. But the need for some set of aims I feel is important. Some careful thought has been given to re-binding policies with respect to the care of that material which should not be handled by routine binding proceedure. One tentative draft for publication in Library Columns, with the approval of the Binding Committee, is being carefully considered. The problem of the care of those materials now generally available to

the public from the stacks, I believe needs careful thought and discussion. I hope that during the next year we may make a systematic beginning which will lead towards an understanding of the proper division of those books which, because of value or special interest, should be housed separately from the general collection. In the Book Arts Collection a nucleus of books has been formed around which these special collections may be of use as tools. To operate without a catalog, except for this Book Arts Collection, has been a great handicap, which I hope will be taken into consideration. I hope this aim, to have a working catalog which is within the building, may not be beyond our range.

That friends of the Library should feel absolutely confident that not only a University Library is the most satisfactory place to which to leave their collections, but that Columbia should be that University, is an aim perhaps not within our reach without more beautiful and unified equipment. However, I do not believe this to be entirely the case. A fundamental trust in our ability to appreciate as well as to care for their books or manuscripts is needed. This I hope can be exemplified by the appreciation of that material already under our care, and the removal of any factors which may lead anyone to believe that

we are not working together in our aims for the well-being of the Library. One disloyal person sufficiently close to be of influence is more than enough to make any prospective donor suspicious of the ultimate safety of his collection. A departmental staff working together, in harmony with the Director, and feeling its part in the service of the University Library and the University as a whole, is, I hope, certainly not beyond the possibility of achievement.

* * *

Earle W. Evans

Enclosed is the report sent to me by Mr. Mendelsohn, Curator of Near East Collections.

Mr. Charles Adams,
Assistant Director of Libraries,
Low Memerial Library.

REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR

1938-1939

1.Cataloging of Books and Manuscripts:

About 500 books (among them about 150 in Arabic,Hebrew,Persian, Turkish,and Yiddish),have been catalogued.Additions to the manuscript collections consisted of 16 Hebrew communal records,and a photographic reproductuion of one of the oldest codices of the Quran known to exist.This Quran is of great value since only a few copies are extant and it is the only copy in the United States.

2.Cataloging of Manuscripts:

Considerable progress has been made in the cataloging of manuscripts for the second volume of the"Descriptive Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts in the Library of Columbia University" and it is hoped that the work will be completed next year.

3.The Collection of the Babylonian Tablets:

The cataloging of all the Babylonian cuneiform tablets in the library (including those of the Smith and Plimpton collections), has been finished and the the catalogue is now ready for publication.

4.The Gottheil Library:

The efforts of the Director of Libraries,Dr.C.C.Williamson, and myself to acquire for Columbia University the library of the late Prof.Gottheil (consisting of about 10,000 vols.),have been successful.Mrs Gottheil has presented the library to Columbia University with the request that the duplicates be returned to her.

5.Services Rendered:

The office of the Curator of the Near East Collections has been frequently visited and consulted by students and professors from Columbia,Teachers College,and foreign institutions.At present the assistant librarian of the Oriental Division of Oxford College is making a special study of our Oriental Manuscripts.

6.Suggestions:

Oriental books are usually known,quoted,and catalogued by title and not by name of the author.Columbia Library enters such books by the name of the author and gives the title in transliteration. This system makes it often difficult for the reader to find the desired book.I would suggest to have a double entry for at least the Hebrew books (about 5000 vols.),namely,one,as now practiced,in transliteration and according to author,and the other in Hebrew characters according to title.In order to carry this through a Hebrew typewriter would be necessary.I therefore suggest the purchase of such for library use.

Very truly yours,

Isaac Mendelsohn

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

To the Director of Libraries

Sir:

As curator of the Plimpton, Smith and Dale Libraries I have the honor to present the following report for the academic year ending June 30, 1939.

It is with great pleasure that I can report that the classifying and listing of the Plimpton Library is practically completed. It is only to be regretted that the word "practically" must be included. It refers to the late American and English copy-books, which have been arranged in alphabetic lots (most of them were issued in series) and are readily available to the staff, even though not listed nor given a classification symbol. As the classification and listing of the books had proceeded in a systematic way, from case to case, with little moving from the original large subject grouping, the month of June was spent in assembling units and in making a continuous sequence of classes. In the process of arrangement, a basic reference collection was segregated so that the Plimpton collection is divided into two main groups - text-books (source material) and a working collection of reference books. While this is far from complete for our needs in cataloging, it is a valuable aid for use with the text-books, and will save the members of the staff many a telephone call or trip to the Reference Department. The uses made of the Plimpton books this year have assured us that no mistake was made in the decision to separate American imprints from foreign and to make a chronologic arrangement within a subject.

Every one concerned has had considerable curiosity as to the actual number of books included in the Plimpton gift. By measuring the number of cards for books listed, it is estimated that some 12,500 books have been classified. This does not include the western manuscripts, Oriental material, nor the eighteen or nineteen hundred duplicates. By another year it is to be hoped that a much more accurate report can be tendered, but this year it did seem that the most urgent matter was to work on the listing so that we could immediately answer the question, "Do you have this book?" Except for Orientalia, this can be done. Cataloging of this collection has now begun, so that it will not be long until cards for the Plimpton Library will appear in the Public Catalog. Along with the classifying and arranging of the books, we were greatly concerned with measures to protect and preserve many items which had been carelessly treated in the past. This involved the supplying of pasteboard backs (and fronts) to hundreds of volumes, the tying up of scores of weak bindings with the ubiquitous (but indispensable) red tape, and the removal from the shelves of many leaves and slender volumes into our convenient storage boxes and cabinets. We feel that we are doing all in our power to satisfy our most sacred obligation to the collections - preservation of their contents.

During this period of organization, little progress has been made in the cataloging of the other two collections. As new histories of mathematics and biographies of mathematicians were added to the Smith Library, they were cataloged so that they might take their place with similar material. It is to be hoped that another year will see the completion of the cataloging of all the material in this collection

which was written as history. From the point of view of reference work done by the staff, it is more important to have reference material readily available than to have the source works fully cataloged. But as the fame of these libraries is due largely to their rich supply of source materials, it is imperative that they be cataloged as rapidly as possible in order that their presence may be made known to users of the public catalog.

No work on the classification or cataloging of the Dale collection was attempted this year, so that it is still represented in the public catalog only by a main entry for each work. However, familiarity by the staff with the actual works enabled us to answer a good many reference questions, although often only at the expense of a good deal of time. This collection presents a much better physical appearance than it did a year ago as all the most urgent binding has been taken care of; in fact, there is not a pair of cardboards nor an inch of red tape to be seen in the whole collection - articles of equipment which are embarrassingly present in great profusion in the other two sections of this Library.

## SPECIAL SERVICES RENDERED

This department was host to the 1938 summer session faculty of the School of Library Service at an afternoon tea late in July. The non-resident instructors seemed particularly glad to have an opportunity to view the illuminated manuscripts and other rare items on display.

The American Mathematical Society, holding its Fiftieth Anniversary conference at Columbia, September 6-9, practically held open house in this Library. Not only had this department arranged a special exhibition of important items from its own collections, but several of our cases

had been appropriated to display portraits of past presidents of the American Mathematical Society as well as autograph letters from its archives and certain commemorative material belonging to the Society. Appreciation of the Library's contribution to the anniversary celebration was expressed in a resolution of thanks tendered to the Curator. A copy of Professor R. C. Archibald's valuable two-volume history of the American Mathematical Society was also presented to the Smith collection at this time.

The Library put on display a few items for the benefit of casual visitors who might drop in at the time of the convocation held for the Dean of St. Paul's on October 18. A few of our fine books of hours, texts of the Bible, both manuscript and important printed editions, and some of the Luther material was put on view in cases nearest the doors to the rotunda.

As a courtesy to the members of the Modern Language Association who met at Columbia the last week of December, material of special interest to them was placed on display in the two exhibit cases by the doors.

In January, Professor Smith addressed the members of the history of mathematics class of Hunter College. In order that important mathematical items which Professor Smith wished to mention might be on display without disturbing the main exhibition, four cases were moved into the Library. Such special displays do not take long to assemble, as elaborate diagrams of all exhibit cases prepared are kept on file, together with display cards used. When special calls come in for small units that are wanted, it takes very ltttle time to get an effective display ready.

At least a dozen organized groups from classes in this University as well as from high schools and colleges in the city have come to view

our treasures, with an instructor in charge. In each case, some member of this staff meets the group and gives a short explanation of the "point" of the exhibit as well as the nature of the collections as a whole. In addition to these rather miscellaneous groups, classes in the history of printing courses from the School of Library Service are brought in to make careful study of the illuminated manuscripts and incunabula. In such cases, the instructor in charge usually assumes most of the responsibility for detailed explanation of individual items.

Careful examination (but as yet no statistics) of the place of origin of the users of the Library readily reveals the rather startling fact that much more use is made of our resources by scholars outside this University than by our own clientele. Both Professor Smith and Mrs. Plimpton are emphatic in their wishes that the collections be made readily available to any serious student, regardless of race, nationality, and university affiliations. To limit the use of this Library to our own faculty, alumni, and holders of bursar's receipts would be to defeat entirely our honorary curators' wishes. In addition, to date, most of our gifts have come from "outsiders." Nevertheless, it does seem peculiar that our own colleagues should use the library less than scholars from "outside the walls." In an effort to remedy this anomalous situation, tactful pressure will be brought to bear on the teachers of two history courses to induce them (and their classes) to make research use of our tools. I refer particularly to the history of mathematics course in Teachers College which is to be given next year by Professor R. C. Archibald of Brown University, and to the history of science course offered by Professor Barry.

As is shown in the table below, the total number of pieces added to our collections was 272. As usual, our most generous patron was Professor Smith. Not only does he continue his subscription list to some dozen periodicals, but he donates a constant supply of books and articles given to him for review or in appreciation of grateful authors. In addition, while in France and Italy last summer, he purchased more than a hundred items especially for the collection. Recently he deposited five hundred dollars to the fund bearing his name, to be used for purchasing books, manuscripts, portraits and instruments.

In gratitude to Professor Smith and for aid given by this Library, Professor Jekuthiel Ginsberg, editor of Scripta Mathematica, presented the collection with a dozen books. One of these is an interesting French book of 1749 by the publisher Panchoucke, with the title Les Amusemens mathematiques, no copy of which is in the Library of Congress or the British Museum.

The World Calendar Association expressed its appreciation of a bibliography prepared in this department by a gift of ten bound volumes and six pamphlets to add to our large collection of material on the calendar.

Some of the most important items added to the collections this year are described below:

(1) FRANCESCO GHALICAI. Summa de arithmetica. Florence, 1521. This is the first edition of a work of which the Plimpton Collection contains the revised editions of 1548 and 1552. While the two later editions are found listed rather commonly, the first edition is

extremely rare. It is really news when it is possible to add an arithmetic printed before 1601 to the Plimpton Collection, as it is very near complete in this field.

(2) EUCLIDES. Les sex premiers livres des Elements d'Euclide, traduictz par Pierre Forcade. Paris, Charles Perior, 1566. This is the second issue of the first translation of the Elements into French, issued two years after the first edition. It is equally rare and not mentioned by Thomas-Stanford in his recent bibliography.

(3) An elaborate ivory sun-dial signed: "Hans Troschel, Normbergae faciebat MDCIII." Hans Troschel was one of the most famous instrument makers of his day. Born in Nuremberg in 1549, where he lived until 1612, he made this sun-dial shortly before his death, when he was probably at the height of his art. Tribute to his artistic skill and mathematical ability was paid him in a work which appeared not long after his death - the Deliciae physico-mathematice of the well-known mathematician, Daniel Schwenter, published in Nuremberg in 1636. Contemporary writers on sun-dials still make mention of Troschel's work. This small ivory dial (2 3/4 x 3 1/2 inches) opens into two parts, like a book. The lower part contains a compass with tiny carved faces blowing winds from each of the four points of the compass. The upper part of the box is marked with the twelve hours of the day. The string connecting the two parts serves as the gnomon. There is also a moon calendar on the back which shows how many hours the moon is behind the sun. The metal discs, supports, and tiny hands used for pointers are exquisitely carved, testifying to the artistic skill of their maker. It is of interest to know that he was the father of two famous artist

sons, one of whom became court painter to the king of Poland.

(4) An interesting three-page manuscript in the handwriting of Sir Isaac Newton. The manuscript appears to be a rough draft from a portion of Newton's Quaeries regarding the word ὁμοούσιος, published in Brewster's Memoirs of Sir Isaac Newton. There are numerous changes and corrections throughout the manuscript. Newton first treats of the word etymologically and compares different translations of it. He then discusses the meaning probably held by the Council of Nicaea, explaining the relation to the ideas embodied in the Nicene Creed. Finally, he traces the changes of meaning which the word underwent in later church councils, particularly in relation to the word ὁμοιούσιος, with which it is compared and contrasted. The manuscript is written on the back of and over a letter of Manquiere (?) to Craven Tayton, dated November 13, 1708, regarding a change in plans for a meeting at the house of Sir Henry Furnese, where Newton was to be one of the guests.

(5) A curious manuscript written in Italy in 1552. It consists of a treatise on astrology with a section on occult writing. Its particular value to this collection is the material it includes on cipher writing with numbers.

(6) A Porto Rican manuscript of the late eighteenth century containing various forms of the sign for the peseta. This may be of considerable aid to scholars in tracing the still unsolved problem of the evolution of the dollar sign.

(7) Twenty vellum documents contributing to source material for the study of French history. They are signed by the king (or his secretary) from Louis XIII through Louis XVI - five from each Louis.

(8) Leaves from an account book of the archbishop of Tours, the accounts being kept with roman numerals.

(9) A seventeenth century manuscript book on horology and astrology. It includes many elaborate and beautifully drawn diagrams, some with moveable parts.

(10) A measure showing the length of the foot in China during the Han dynasty (ca. 200 B. C. - 220 A. D.) It consists of four coins (probably contemporary with the Han dynasty) imbedded in a modern piece of wood, bearing the description in Chinese characters.

EXHIBITIONS

I. History of mathematics, emphasizing especially American mathematics, for the benefit of the anniversary of the American Mathematical Society. On display, August 1, 1938 - November 30, 1938.

II. Orientalia, mainly manuscripts. Included a large number of Korans, Islamic book bindings and miniature paintings. On display, December 15, 1938 - April 15, 1939.

III. Some Aspects of the Life and Scientific Thought of the Renaissance, as displayed in contemporary books and manuscripts. On display, May 1, 1939 - October 31, 1939.

The large amount of work accomplished the past year was possible only because of the enthusiasm and cooperation of the staff, both permanent and temporary. Mrs. Christmas and Mr. Ives are as conscientious and rapid workers as one could ask for. Each worked many an extra hour not on their weekly schedules in order to accomplish units of work on which they were engaged. The two N.Y.A. boys assigned to this Library

put as much "heart" into their work as though they were regular employees. They were intelligent and energetic, and a real addition to our small but able and loyal staff.

Respectfully submitted,

July 12, 1939

Curator